Correct coding for laboratory procedures during assisted reproductive technology cycles

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This document provides updated coding information for services related to assisted reproductive technology procedures. This document replaces the 2012 ASRM document of the same name. (Fertil Steril® 2016;105:e5–8. ©2016 by American Society for Reproductive Medicine.)

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BACKGROUND

Physicians should code accurately for the services they provide and the diagnoses that justify those services. Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) 2016 is a listing of procedures performed by physicians and other health care professionals and is maintained by the American Medical Association (AMA). It is generally accepted as the universal reporting system for services performed in the United States as well as many other countries around the world. Each procedure in CPT is reported with a five-digit code that may be further explained by the addition of various two-digit modifiers.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In vitro fertilization (IVF) involves a multitude of complex laboratory procedures performed over an interval of 1 to 7 days. These procedures involve both the male and female gametes as well as the subsequent embryos that develop. Current Procedural Terminology initially had only one code to describe the laboratory procedures that took place from the time the oocyte was aspirated from the ovary until the embryo was transferred to the uterus or was cryopreserved. A single code quickly became inadequate to describe the many different components of work involved as the variety and complexity of assisted reproductive technology (ART) expanded. As technology has changed, new CPT codes have been added to describe the work performed in the ART setting.

This document outlines the proper use of individual and specific codes for each component of the laboratory work involved in an IVF cycle. Bundling of multiple procedures into one or two codes is no longer appropriate, because each of these codes describes distinct and separately identifiable work involved in the laboratory during an IVF cycle.

The laboratory part of the work in an IVF cycle may involve any or all of several procedures currently defined by CPT. In general, procedures involving the oocyte or embryo are coded for the female partner, whereas those directly involving sperm alone are coded for the male partner. Alternatively, all of these procedures may be applied to the female.

The following CPT codes (89250–89398, as well as CPT level III codes 0058T and 0357T) may be applicable in the IVF cycle. Codes are presented in the order they are listed in the CPT book, rather than the sequence in which they are typically performed in an IVF cycle.

INDIVIDUAL ART CODES

89250 Culture of Oocyte(s)/Embryo(s), Less than 4 Days

This code describes only the culture of oocyte(s)/embryo(s) for duration of culture of less than 4 days. It includes the day of insemination but not the procedure involved with the insemination (conventional and/or assisted fertilization [89268, 89280, 89281]). It does not include oocyte identification from follicular fluid (89254) or preparation of embryo for transfer (any method) (89255). It does not include assisted embryo hatching, microtechniques (any method) (89253), cryopreservation; embryo(s) (89258), or oocyte/embryo biopsy (89290, 89291). This code may be reported whether culturing

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fresh oocyte(s)/embryo(s) or previously cryopreserved oocyte(s)/embryo(s).

89251 Culture of Oocyte(s)/Embryo(s), Less than 4 Days; with Coculture of Oocyte(s)/Embryo(s)

This code includes all of the work described by culture of oocyte(s)/embryo(s) (89250) with the additional work of coculturing the embryos with feeder cells (granulosa, endometrial, tubal, etc.). This code would also include the work involved in preparing the culture system. This code is reported instead of 89250 when coculture is utilized. It includes the day of insemination but not the procedure involved with the insemination (conventional and/or assisted fertilization [89268, 89280, 89281]). It does not include oocyte identification from follicular fluid (89254) or preparation of embryo for transfer (any method) (89255). It does not include assisted embryo hatching, microtechniques (any method) (89253), cryopreservation; embryo (89258), or oocyte/embryo biopsy (89290, 89291). This code may be reported whether culturing fresh oocyte(s)/embryo(s) or previously cryopreserved oocyte(s)/embryo(s).

89253 Assisted Embryo Hatching, Microtechniques (Any Method)

This code describes any micromanipulation technique used to assist hatching of the embryo from the zona pellucida. It includes using acid Tyrode's solution, laser, or partial zona dissection (PZD) performed for this purpose. It is distinct from codes for culture of oocyte(s)/embryo(s) (89250), culture of oocyte(s)embryo(s); with coculture of embryos (89251), extended culture (89272), and assisted oocyte fertilization; microtechnique (89280, 89281) and should be reported separately. This does not include preparation of embryo for transfer (any method) (89255).

89254 Oocyte Identification from Follicular Fluid

This code refers to the work of identifying the oocytes contained in the follicular fluid aspirated at the time of the oocyte retrieval. This does not include any of the work involved in follicle puncture for oocyte retrieval, (any method) (58970) or the subsequent work of culture of oocyte(s)/embryo(s) (89250), the coculture of oocyte(s)/embryo(s) (89251), or extended culture (89272). This code is reported only once per ART cycle regardless of the number of oocytes identified.

89255 Preparation of Embryo for Transfer (Any Method)

This code includes the following work: removing the embryo(s) from culture, preparing the embryo(s) for transfer, loading the embryo(s) into an appropriate catheter, transporting the embryo(s) to the transfer room for transfer to the patient, and examination of the catheter after transfer to ensure that no embryo(s) are retained. This code does not include the work of culture of oocyte(s)/embryo(s) (89250), or coculture of oocyte(s)/embryo(s) (89251), extended culture (89272), and is not a part of the work involved in embryo transfer, intrauterine (58974), or gamete, zygote, or embryo intrafallopian transfer (any method) (58976). It also does not include thawing of cryopreserved embryo(s) (89352) or assisted embryo hatching (89253). This code would be utilized for preparation of either a fresh or cryopreserved embryo.

89257 Sperm Identification from Aspiration (Other than Seminal Fluid)

This code includes the work involved in identification of sperm from an aspirate, usually from the vas deferens or epididymis. It specifically excludes identification of sperm from seminal fluid; such work is described by other codes, including semen analysis; presence and/or motility of sperm including Huhner test (postcoital) (89300), semen analysis; motility and count (not including Huhner test) (89310), semen analysis; volume, count, motility, and differential (89320), semen analysis; sperm presence and motility of sperm, if performed (89321), or semen analysis; volume, count, motility, and differential using strict morphologic criteria (e.g., Kruger) (89322). This code includes only the work of identifying sperm and does not include the work of assisted oocyte fertilization, microtechnique (any method) (89280, 89281).

89258 Cryopreservation; Embryo(s)

This code includes the work of cryopreservation of the embryo(s), regardless of the stage of embryo development. It does not include thawing of the embryo (89352) or subsequent culture of oocyte(s)/embryo(s) (89250), or culture of oocyte(s)/embryo(s); with coculture of embryos (89251), extended culture (89272), or any subsequent charge for storage of the embryos (89342). It also does not include subsequent preparation of embryo for transfer (89255).

If embryos are cryopreserved on more than one day during the IVF cycle (i.e., pronuclear stage, cleavage stage, and/or blastocyst), it is appropriate to submit this code for each day that additional work is required.

89259 Cryopreservation; Sperm

This code includes the work involved in cryopreservation of sperm. It does not include:

- Semen analysis; presence and/or motility of sperm including Huhner test (postcoital) (89300)
- Semen analysis; motility and count (89310)
- Semen analysis; volume, count, motility, and differential (89320), semen analysis; sperm presence and motility of sperm, if performed (89321), or semen analysis; volume, count, motility, and differential using strict morphologic criteria (e.g., Kruger) (89322)
- Sperm identification from aspiration (other than seminal fluid) (89257)
- Sperm identification from testis tissue, fresh or cryopreserved (89264)
- Sperm isolation; simple prep (e.g., sperm wash and swim-up) for insemination or diagnosis with semen analysis (89260)